

certain halo of divinity because they are thought to be animated by the divine spirit of their ancestor, the founder of the dynasty.

The belief The universal belief of the Shilluks In the former former humanity of Nyakang is strongly confirmed by the exact humanity parallelism which prevails between his worship and that of i^os^fc^{No}^kanS the dead kin^fs his successors. Like them he is worshipped firmed by at his tomb; but unlike them he has not one tornb dieanaigy onl^ but ten scattered over the col3nt^{ry}. Each of these

worship to tombs is called " the grave of Nyakang/³ though the people dead^ofthe well know that nobody is buried there. Like the grave-shiikiuk shrines of the other kings, those of Nyakang consist of a 'ingb" small group of circular huts of the ordinary pattern enclosed by a fence. Only children under puberty and the few old people whose duty it is to take care of the shrines may enter these sacred enclosures. The rites performed at them resemble those observed at the shrines of the kings. Two

great ceremonies are annually performed at the shrines of Nyakang: one is observed before the beginning of the rainy season in order to ensure a due supply of rain; the other is a thanksgiving at harvest, when porridge

made from the new grain is poured out on the threshold of Nyakang's hut and smeared on the outer walls of the building. Even before the millet is reaped the people cut some of the ripening ears and thrust them into the thatch of the sacred hut. Thus it would seem that the Shilluks believe themselves to be dependent on the favour of Nyakang for the rain and the crops. ^{li} As the giver of rain, Nyakang is the first and greatest

benefactor of the people. In that country rain is everything, without rain there is nothing. The Shilluk does not trouble his head about artificial irrigation, he waits for the rain. If the rain falls, then the millet grows, the cows thrive, man has food and can dance and marry; for that is the ideal of the Shilluks." * Sick people also bring or send sheep as an offering to the nearest shrine of Nyakang in order that they may be healed of their sickness. The attendants of the

¹ W. Hofmayr, *op. cit.* p. 125. important part of the vegetable world,
 " It must be remembered that the due depends on the well-being of the divine growth of the crops, i.e. of the most king"(C.G. Seligmann, *op. cit.* p. 229).